



## Sexual Homicide Through a Cross-Cultural Lens

Rion Heroux, M.A.

Though sexual homicide is a rare occurrence, it is a very relevant topic in the study of forensics because the media sensationalizes this criminogenic behavior, misleading the public's belief about its frequency. From a statistical standpoint, less than 5% of all sexual crimes are considered sexual homicides (Beauregard, 2019; Chan & Heide, 2016; Chopin & Beauregard, 2019; Healey & Beauregard, 2017; Higgs, Carter, Stefanska, & Glorney, 2017; James & Proulx, 2014; Reale, Beauregard, & Martineau, 2017; Sewall, Krupp, & Lalumière, 2013; Spehr, Hill, Habermann, Briken, & Berner, 2010). While the dearth of research contributes to the lack of a universally accepted definition of sexual homicide, the fact remains this heinous sexual crime is conducted throughout all cultures with the commonality of a paraphilic-related disorder called sadism (Beauregard, 2019; Beauregard & DeLisi, 2018; DeLisi & Beauregard, 2018; Healey & Beauregard, 2017; James & Proulx, 2014, 2016; James et al., 2019; Koeppe et al., 2019).

The sadistic sexual homicide offender's lifestyle is plagued with deviance ranging from compulsive masturbation to the committal of homicide to satiate one's sexual needs (Beauregard, 2019; James & Proulx, 2016; Koeppe et al., 2019). Researchers have found the modus operandi of French serial sexual murderers is analogous to serial sexual murderers

in North America (Beauregard, 2019; James & Proulx, 2016). French and North American offenders share similar characteristics, including (Beauregard, 2019; James & Proulx, 2016):

- An antisocial lifestyle.
- Performing sexual homicides under the influence of alcohol.
- Displaying hostile personalities.
- Feeling a sense of entitlement to satiate one's immediate needs.
- Using coercion.
- Being known to be disorganized, impulsive, and violent.

It is important to distinguish the difference between French and North American serial sexual murderers from the context of internal constraint (Beauregard, 2019; James & Proulx, 2016). More specifically, French sexual homicide offenders have immediate needs for sexual gratification whereas North American offenders have immediate needs to express intense anger (Beauregard, 2019; James & Proulx, 2016). It is important to note the incongruence of information on serial sexual murderers may be the result of how the data is collected and each culture's belief system (Beauregard, 2019; James & Proulx, 2016). For example, the collection of data on French sexual homicide offenders is derived from interrogations and criminal records, whereas North American data is provided by institutional records and post-sentencing interviews (Beauregard, 2019; James & Proulx, 2016).

The manner in which sexual homicide is conducted may be impacted by the offender's country of origin. In a study that compared French and Canadian sexual homicide offenders, the French were more likely than Canadian offenders to engage in kidnapping and restraining the victim, performing sexual acts on the victim, and hiding the victim's body after the crime (Beauregard, 2019). Beauregard's (2019) study analyzed offenders from Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Scotland, Finland, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, and France. It was discovered that vaginal intercourse was the most prevalent crime scene behavior detected in sexual homicide cases in these countries, ranging from 40% to 50% of the time (Beauregard, 2019). Belgium's percentage in which vaginal intercourse was identified in sexual homicide cases specific to that country was higher at 75% (Beauregard, 2019). Anal intercourse comprised nearly 30% of all sexual homicide cases except for the United States, in which this act is detected in nearly 74% of the cases (Beauregard, 2019). Strangulation and asphyxiation were consistent methods found at the crime scenes in most of the countries, except for Germany in which German sexual homicide offenders strangled or asphyxiated their victims in nearly 40% to 60% of the cases (Beauregard, 2019). There is a significant discrepancy between countries regarding the disposal of the victim's body in which more than 10% of this behavior has been found in the United Kingdom, whereas nearly 70% of sexual homicide offenders in the United States dispose of the victim's body (Beauregard, 2019).

Target selection also varies between cultures because of the layouts of rural, urban, and suburban populations, the ability or inability to travel, various travel methods such as a personal car, taxi, or bus, and accessibility to highways versus small town roads (Beauregard, 2019). These factors are crucial when examining the distance from the offender's home to the distance of the disposal site (Beauregard, 2019). For example, sexual homicide offenders from the United States will travel double the distance in comparison to those residing in the United Kingdom and Germany (25 miles versus 9 miles, respectively) (Beauregard, 2019). The differences between the countries may be impacted by travel methods, freeway accessibility, and physical environment (Beauregard, 2019).

A study focused on mutilation in homicide cases and compared Korean homicides to those committed in Finland and Sweden (Beauregard, 2019). More than 50% of Korean homicides involved dismemberment because it is easier to move the body when it's cut into pieces in addition to avoiding detection (Beauregard, 2019). Most cases involved the removal of the victim's head and fingers to conceal the evidence with some Korean offenders using arson for detection avoidance (Beauregard, 2019). Since Korea consists of large apartment buildings, offenders used these methods to dispose of the body since the close proximity of neighbors would draw unwanted attention (Beauregard, 2019). In Sweden and Finland, the layout of the land is vast, so the need to use dismemberment is not as crucial since it is not as densely populated in comparison to Korea (Beauregard, 2019). In fact, Swedish and Finnish sexual homicide offenders have been known to use accomplices to move the body because the chance of detection is lower (Beauregard, 2019). In another light, South African mutilation cases may not be driven by malintent because body parts have been known to be used for medicinal purposes (Beauregard, 2019). While sexual homicide has been documented throughout various countries, the means and methods for carrying out sexual homicide may be dependent on environment and cultural beliefs.

## Author's Biography:

Rion Heroux, M.A., is a clinician at New Choices Recovery Center. New Choices Recovery provides supportive programs and services to assist individuals affected by mental illness and substance use. Heroux is currently obtaining his credentials to be a Certified Alcohol and Substance Abuse Counselor (CASAC) and becoming an NACP-credentialed advocate. Heroux is a frequent contributor to Forensic Mental Health Insider, which is the official quarterly newsletter publication of the American Institute for the Advancement of Forensic Studies (AIAFS). Heroux received his Bachelor of Science degree through SUNY Empire State College in 2017 with majors in criminology and mental health and his Master of Arts degree through Concordia University, St. Paul in 2019 with a major in forensic behavioral health. From 2014 to 2016, he served as a volunteer for the Pride Center of the Capital Region. In this capacity, he co-facilitated groups for the LGBTQIA youth and adult communities as well as for men's support programs. In 2016, Heroux completed his internship with the New York State Troopers to learn about the organization, staffing, mission, activities, programs, and services of the Division of New York State Police. Heroux is a current member of the American Institute for the Advancement of Forensic Studies and the New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NYSCASA).

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